

Frequently Asked Questions

• *When will my street have the overhead lines undergrounded and who decides which areas are undergrounded first?*

In accordance with City Council Policy 600-08, the City Council approves the master plan for undergrounding. The master plan and the policy are available on our website. The undergrounding master plan is also available for viewing at all City libraries and Community Service Centers.

• *I received a notice that my street will be undergrounded soon. How can I get more information about what will happen?*

You can sign up on our website to get monthly e-mail updates about your specific project. Our website also provides detailed information about the process of undergrounding and what you can expect. You can also call or e-mail us anytime during the project with questions or concerns.

• *Will this cost me anything?*

In most cases, no. It is the legal responsibility of the property owner to underground from the street to their house or business beginning at the property line. However, the utility companies will perform this work at no cost to the property owner as long as the property owner signs an agreement to allow utility companies on to their property. Otherwise, property owners are required to perform this work at their own cost.

• *I have received a notification of a Public Hearing to underground the lines on my street. Do I need to attend?*

You have the right to attend and to express your views regarding the project and your responsibility as a property owner within the Underground Utility District. However, you are not required to attend.

• *Once my street is selected, how long does it take to underground the lines?*

From the time you receive notice that the Council has created an Underground Utility District, there will be a period of 12 to 18 months of design. You may see engineers working from time to time on your street. Once construction begins, most projects are completed in 18 to 24 months.



Contacting Us

A CLEAR VIEW OF SAN DIEGO

Utilities Undergrounding Program

619-533-3841
www.sandiego.gov/undergrounding


Via our website you can:


- See the master plan
- Get specific project information and details
- Sign up for automatic e-mail project updates
- See photos of work on private property
- See photos of utility boxes
- Look at maps of proposed lighting locations
- Learn about the history of undergrounding
- View project forms and more

The City of San Diego thanks its partners in Undergrounding:



This information is available in alternative formats upon request.





THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

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Overview

The City of San Diego, through its Utilities Undergrounding Program, is currently relocating approximately 30-35 miles of overhead utility lines underground throughout the city each year.

In addition to utilizing statewide funds for undergrounding, the City's aggressive plans for undergrounding overhead utilities is funded primarily through a 2003 California Public Utilities Commission approved undergrounding surcharge on San Diego residents' electricity bills.

Overall, the City currently spends approximately \$50 million per year to convert unsightly overhead power and communication lines with safer and more reliable underground systems. These funds are dedicated exclusively for undergrounding and may not be used by the City for other purposes.

Although the City has been undergrounding lines since 1970, approximately 1,000 miles of overhead utility lines remain to be undergrounded. It is estimated that nearly all residential areas will be completed within the next 20 to 25 years.



To see when your area is scheduled for undergrounding, or for general information about the City's Utilities Undergrounding Program, give us a call or visit our website at:

619-533-3841
www.sandiego.gov/undergrounding



The process of converting overhead lines to underground has several phases:

- **Public Hearings**
- **Design**
- **Notifications**
- **Construction**
- **Post Construction**

Public Hearings

Prior to the commencement of any design work, the City Council must create an **Underground Utility District**.

In accordance with the San Diego Municipal Code, the City Council must hold public hearings in order to create an Underground Utility District.

All residents and property owners within an Underground Utility District will be mailed a **Public Hearing Notice** and a **map** of the proposed area to be converted to underground.

The Public Hearing Notice informs property owners that they own property within an area the City Council is intending to underground. The notice explains what the possible impacts are to owning property within an Underground Utility District. Any member of the public may attend or speak at the Public Hearing.

After the Public Hearing, all property owners within the Underground Utility District will be sent a copy of the Council Resolution and a map of the newly created Underground Utility District.



Design

Once the City Council has created an Underground Utility District, the design process begins. This typically takes 12-18 months to complete.

During this time, residents may see engineers placing marks on the street, surveyors performing field surveys, or other professionals who are involved in the design process such as those who gather property information or who videotape existing field conditions.



Notifications

All property owners will receive notices prior to the start of construction. Property owners will receive an additional notice prior to any work occurring on private property.

Approximately 6 months prior to the start of construction, property owners will receive a request to enter into a written agreement allowing SDG&E onto their private property in order to perform the trenching and other related work that will prepare their property to receive underground utility service.

This agreement is referred to as a **Permit To Enter**. For more information about the Permit To Enter or to see a sample copy, visit our website.

Approximately two weeks prior to the start of construction, a door hanger from SDG&E will be placed on the doors of all residents. The door hanger will contain a name and phone number in order to contact the contractor directly.

A second door hanger is placed approximately two weeks prior to any electrical work on individual private properties. This door hanger provides a contact name and phone number for the electrical contractor who will be working on the property.



Construction

Construction of underground utility systems and the subsequent removal of overhead utility systems typically takes between 18 and 24 months for most large projects. This process consists of four phases: **Trenching**, **Cabling**, **Cut-Overs** and **Pole Removal**.

Phase I Trenching

In this phase, crews create a trench and install round plastic conduit below the surface of the roadway. The crews will also trench up to each of the homes and businesses at this time. This is the most community impacted phase of construction and typically can be expected to last 9 to 12 months.

On average, most trenching crews can perform 100 feet of trenching or more per day, so trenching operations can be expected to be in front of any particular home or business for just a few days.

During this phase, a separate electrical contractor will be working on the electrical panels of the individual homes and businesses in order to prepare them to receive the new underground service. You can visit our website to see photos of typical residential conversion work.

Phase II Cabling

In this phase, technicians place new utility lines within the new conduits. The new lines are then energized and brought into service. Residents will most likely hardly notice the few crews who perform this work as this work has very little community impact. This phase can be expected to last between 6 to 9 months.

Also during this phase, residents will probably notice the new transformer and cable boxes and pedestals being placed above ground near the curbs. These boxes are necessary for the underground system and cannot be placed underground for system reliability reasons. You can visit our website to view pictures of what some of these boxes look like.



Phase III Cut – Overs

Once a new underground system is in place and energized, and all properties have been prepared to receive underground service, all properties are switched over from the overhead lines to the new underground systems. This phase will typically take 1 to 2 months.

Phase IV Pole Removal

When 100% of properties have been switched over to the new underground system, the overhead systems are de-energized and removed. This phase can last 2 to 3 months.

Post Construction

Once the overhead utility lines are removed, there is still some work left to finish the projects. The streetlights that once were attached to the wooden poles must be replaced, the roadway must be resurfaced and, if applicable, street trees are installed where necessary.

Streetlights

New concrete streetlight poles are installed in accordance with the City's current streetlight standards. In many cases residents will notice that the lighting locations have moved from their old locations and that additional lighting has been added. Since new lights cannot be placed until old poles are removed, there may be a short period without any streetlighting. When property owners are notified of public hearings, they are provided with a map of the project including proposed lighting locations. Lighting locations for specific projects also appear on our website.

Trees

All reasonable steps are taken to protect trees while work is in progress. Where safety is a concern, a tree may need to be removed. All tree removals are performed according to City policies and permitting process.

The City will provide and plant a new tree for any property owner who is willing to water and care for the tree until it has become established. More information about this opportunity is provided to property owners through the mail prior to construction.